



**STRATEGY  
RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

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**WHY BLACK OFFICERS FAIL IN THE U.S. ARMY**

**BY**

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United States Army**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**AUTHOR:** Remo Butler, (LTC), USA

**TITLE:** Why Black Officers Fail

**FORMAT:** Strategy Research Project

**Date:** 15 April 1995    **Pages:** 30    **CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified

Black officers are falling behind their white counterparts at the LTC and above level at an alarming rate. This paper looks at this phenomena not from the traditional view that racism is the root cause, but that a lack of cultural understanding on the parts of Whites and Blacks in the military is the primary cause. This study examines some of the cultural biases inherent in the military culture, promotion rates, assignments, and attitudes of people in the military. Lastly this study looks at ways to overcome this problem, if that is in fact a goal.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1990, Blacks comprised 29.1% of the Army, but only 11% of the Officer Corps.<sup>1</sup> In 1994, those statistics have not changed significantly: Blacks now account for 27.2% of the Army, but only 11.2% of the officer strength. The table below is a breakdown of officer percentage by race in the quarter ending September 1994.

GRADE	White non Hispanic		Black non Hispanic	
	No.	%	No.	%
GO	307	91.64	22	6.57
Col	3460	90.93	185	4.86
Ltc	7951	86.57	762	8.30
Maj	11713	80.71	1812	12.49
Cpt	21111	80.12	3258	12.36
1Lt	7027	78.96	1135	12.75
2Lt	7453	80.96	927	10.07

Table- 1.<sup>2</sup>

The numbers show that up to the rank of Major, Black Officers constitute about 12% of the officer corps, but in the higher ranks, the percentage significantly decreases. Their White counterparts seem to have the opposite distribution: as rank increases, the percentage of White officers increases by about 10%. The figure below graphically presents the data..

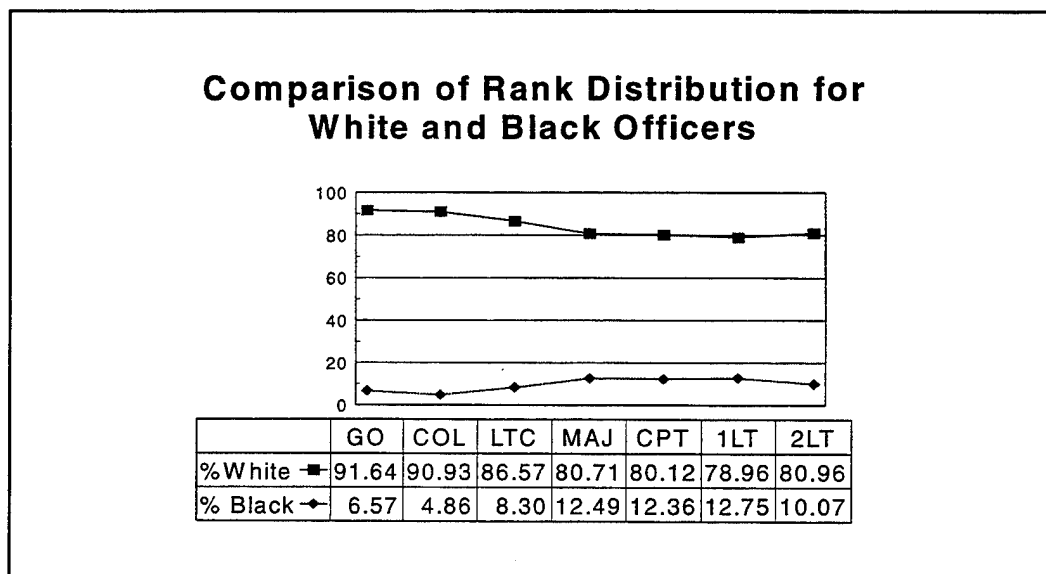


Figure-1

Why do Black Officers in the United States Army not achieve the success at the same rates as their White peers? This is not a new issue. It has been looked at in one form or another since Blacks were allowed into the military. In 1924, the Army War College (AWC) conducted a survey titled: The Use of Negro Man Power in War.<sup>3</sup> The following responses to the survey were typical of the thought process White Officers used during this time. (This survey is available in the Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks.)

“53 were of the opinion that there should be a minimum number of Negro officers utilized, generally in the grade of company officers and that their appointment should be made in the accordance with the same standards as to physical, mental and moral qualifications as are applied to white applicants. A large opinion, while entertaining this view held that promotion of Negro officers should be made only upon demonstrated efficiency and capacity to command proved by actual combat service. About 15 considered that there should be no Negro officers commissioned in any combattant arms but only in service organizations. A number of answers discussed limiting the proportion of Negroes in officer grades to certain percentages and other details for handling the Negro officer problem.”<sup>4</sup>

We have come a long way since this survey in 1924, but we still have a long way to go to achieve equality. Taking into account that the Army is committed to fighting intolerance and bigotry and ensuring that minorities are fairly represented, this should not be considered an unreasonable quest. In the process of conducting research and gathering data for this paper, it has become obvious that promotion inequality still is a legitimate issue that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, inequality is still an issue in today's Army, although no one likes to admit that. The primary purpose in writing this paper is to show by statistics and examples that Black Officers are not succeeding at the same rate as their white peers. Secondly, it is to show why this is happening and how the situation can be corrected.

Today, the United States of America is being torn by racial strife and many of the accompanying issues such as affirmative action. These are issues that many people including some in the military do not want to or are afraid to address. One of the main reasons to attack a contentious issue such as this is to bring attention to the issue, and then perhaps through discourse or education we can find a satisfactory solution to the problem.

Is there a problem? Are Blacks not reaching the upper ranks in the military? The following quotes very aptly bring this point home.

“According to Defense Department statistics, women and minorities are consistently under represented above the rank of O-4, although they have been in the military in large numbers since the 1960s.”<sup>5</sup>

“In the military promotions race, Blacks tend to lag behind Whites at the critical E-7 and O-4 levels, while women fair better than men according to a congressional study.

After analyzing five years of Defense Department statistics, the General Accounting Office (GAO) found what it called “significant disparities” by race and gender in accessions, assignments and promotions.

The accounting office, which serves as a congressional watchdog, stressed that the differences do not prove discrimination exists. But it did recommend that the Pentagon change the way it tracks the recruitment and career development of women and minorities.

Defense officials had little reaction to the report except to agree with its findings and question its timeliness.

“It's not new,” an equal opportunity official said.”<sup>6</sup>

In writing this paper I will attempt to bring home several issues that contribute to the failure of the Black Officer to progress at the same rate as his White counterpart, and what can be done to rectify this problem. One of the most critical areas to be successful is to have the right series of jobs, not just any jobs, but developmental assignments that will guide one on a successful career path. The following is an excerpt from an article that appeared in the Army Times that discussed minorities and job assignments.

“Senior commanders should be asked to monitor company level assignments to help female and minority officers advance through the ranks, according to the director of an equal opportunity study.

Keith A. Maxie, who is studying the officer promotion pipeline, said women and minorities lag behind white men in earning prime assignments at the beginning of their careers. Since long-term success in the military often depends on getting early command jobs, Maxie said, women and minorities fall behind almost as soon as they are recruited and trained. As a result the military might be losing qualified women and minorities before they reach the upper ranks.”<sup>7</sup>

Another issue that may hinder Black advancement is the difference in culture. In this multi-cultural society how much do we actually know about one another? How do we view differences in dress, music, attitudes and other areas. If we don't know or understand each other, we will bring some misconceptions that could interfere with our good judgement.

I want to stimulate the reader to look into himself or herself and do some critical thinking; to ask the question “how can I help to solve this problem?” Are we promoting cultural awareness, and education in the Army? If so, are we doing it correctly, and if not, how can we fix it? There are no hidden agendas in this paper, there is no ax to grind. The only agenda is to educate and encourage critical thinking on solving some of the societal problems that plague the Army and, consequently, how to make the U. S Army better and stronger.

Many whites don't believe that discrimination exists in the U. S. Army. A survey conducted in November 1995 by a War College reported:

That other sharp difference in respondent groups exist...100% of black males, 75% of White females, and 50% of Hispanic males agree that institutional racism still exists in the army while only 40% of White males agree...100% of White males, White females, and 50% of Hispanic males agree that the nature of discrimination is more sporadic than pervasive compared to only 40% of Black males who agree... Black males consistently responded almost in whole, oppositely from White males, White females and Hispanic males on minorities getting a fair shake.<sup>8</sup>

Institutional racism and discrimination were least likely to be perceived by those least affected by discrimination, the White male officer. This is the group that needs to be educated and sensitized to the problems that minorities encounter on a daily basis. My hope is that some of the current and future leaders will read this paper and promote a change in the system that will present a level playing field for all members of the Armed Forces. The Army has a good track record in dealing with affirmative action but there is room for improvement.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for gathering information for this paper was a combination of readings, personnel interviews, and questionnaires. The initial research for this paper began in September 1995. A great deal of data was collected from many varied sources.

Before looking at the methodology for conducting this research, let me make it perfectly clear that the hardest part of this paper was getting information. Two things made writing this paper extremely difficult. The first is that any issue dealing with race in the military is contentious and people would rather not deal with it. The second is that there is a lack of information on Blacks in the military. After making numerous calls to different offices in the DCSPER (Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel) in Washington and being passed around, a female Captain responded to my query for information with "Sir, do you really believe that there is a problem in the system? I don't." Her question and answer were unsolicited, but this gave an indication of the problems that would have to be overcome in getting information for this subject. The perception is that DCSPER purposely makes any type of racial data hard to get. No one wants to give answers or information on where to get certain types of race specific information. After being told to send a written request for information to this office, this was the reply:

This responds to your two Freedom of Information Act Requests dated August 22, 1995, pertaining to why Black Officers fail in the military. The information requested is not in this agency's area of responsibility, and is being referred to the following office for a direct reply.<sup>9</sup>

This information was not given at the time of the initial telephone conversation and resulted in a delay. Once the information arrived it was only partial, all of the requested data didn't arrive but a bill for \$53.16 did. The bill was cleared up with the assistance of my project advisor and the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at the AWC. Following is the reply from the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) officer:

In my initial reply to you I indicated that the FOIA fee was \$53.16. After coordinating with LTC Faulkenbury, Army War College Public Affairs Officer, a decision has been made to waive the FOIA fee in this instance. Future requests should be made through non-FOIA sources.<sup>10</sup>

Someone in the DCSPER office should have been able to give directions on how and from whom to get the information. There are many possible explanations, but it was my perception that someone may have thought: if he doesn't get any help he will go away.

Still, there is a lack or shortage of information on Blacks in the military even here at the Army War College. When one looks for written material on Blacks in the military, you must look hard because there is not an abundance of material. In addition, you must know exactly where to look or you won't find anything. The information that was received from PERSCOM was adequate, but the fullest information came from General Accounting Office (GAO) reports and the Army Times.

#### PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The next step was to conduct individual interviews with nine (9) Black male and eleven (11) White Officers, most in the combat arms, and all members of AWC Class of 1996. These

interviews were semi-structured. The intent was to get into the decision making loop of the officer being interviewed to understand how he made his decisions. The first questions were: Did you have Black Officers under your command? If so, how did they perform? The responses ran along racial lines. The majority of the White Officers started off with the same sentence "I had one real good Black Officer." This, in turn, led to other questions such as what made him good and the others bad, and in general stimulated some very good dialogue. On several occasions, it made people look at some of the decisions they made, the impact it had, and helped them understand why they made these decisions. The typical response from the Black Officers was "Yes, I had some Black Officers under my command and some were good, some average, and I had one that was sorry."

The most important result of the personal interviews was my perception that none of the officers were racially biased. They made their decisions based on their personal knowledge and perceptions of the individual and his/her capabilities. It was not specifically based on race or gender. However, race does enter into the equation because of the contributions of cultural misperceptions.

## QUESTIONNAIRES

In the Army War College Class of 1996, there is an informal group of Black Officers that meets monthly to discuss issues that concern the Black Officer. Most of the members of this group answered a questionnaire on "Why do Black Officers Fail in the Army?" The purpose of this questionnaire was to get opinions from successful Black Officers as to why the overall success rate for Blacks is so low. This questionnaire covered a wide range of subjects such as: Is there a problem? Do you think that Black Officers fail at a disproportionate rate? How does

education or the school that the young Black Officer attended affect him. Is culture (Black culture) a part of why Blacks fail? Is there anything in the Army system that contributes to Blacks failure?

The answers to these questions were very insightful, and to the chagrin of some, placed a portion of the blame squarely on the shoulders of some Black Officers themselves. It was also brought out that there are some systemic problems that make it a little bit harder for the Black Officer to be as successful as his White counterpart. A lot of these disparities can be overcome by mentorship, educating the leaders and future leaders in cultural awareness, and lessening the impact of the "Old Boy Network." In the discussion part of this paper we will take an in-depth look at the education process - both military and civilian.

Lastly, a great deal of information was taken from a survey conducted in November 1995 at the Army War College by LTC Buck Buchanan.<sup>11</sup> This was an ideal tool that showed how the different races viewed discrimination in the military.

## **RESULTS**

The following is a excerpt from an article in the Army times about minorities being under represented above the rank of Major (O-4):

For many O-4 is it.....

According to Defense Department statistics, women and minorities are consistently under represented above the rank of O-4, although they have been in the military in large numbers since the 1960's. Women make up about 16 percent of the military's O-4's but less than 5 percent of the O-6's and 1 percent of the flag officers. And Blacks make up 9 percent of the O-4's , they make up 6 percent of the O-5's and 3 percent of the O-6's. Concerned about these trends Defense Secretary William Perry requested Maxie's study in a five point equal opportunity program he unveiled in March 1994. Maxie (Retired army Col) began work that May and plans to present his recommendations to Perry in September.<sup>12</sup>

COL Maxie has completed his study but the results haven't been released as of this writing. The following reasons why minorities are under represented in the higher ranks are attributed to COL Maxie in the Army Times article:

... women and minorities lag behind white men in earning prime assignments at the beginning of their careers. Since long term success in the military often depends on getting early command jobs, Maxie said women and minorities fall behind almost as soon as they are recruited and trained. As a result the military might be losing qualified women and minorities before they reach the upper ranks.<sup>13</sup>

GAO confirms that in the upper ranks that there is a problem with Blacks in the Army continuing to fall behind in the promotion rates as compared to their White counterparts. In an analysis of promotion decisions between FY 1989 through 1993, the GAO reported:

...we used the eligible pool of data for promotions reported in the services military Equal Opportunity Assessments. In about 37% of the enlisted (E-7, E-8, and E-9) and officer (O-4, O-5, O-6) promotion boards we examined, one or more minority groups had statistically significant lower odds of being promoted than whites. We found statistically significant lower odds of minorities being promoted compared to whites most often (1) for Blacks, (2) at the E-7 and O-4 levels.<sup>14</sup>

We analyzed accessions, assignments considered career enhancing, and promotions to identify possible racial or gender disparities in selection rates. Our analysis showed statistically significant disparities in selection rates in each of the three categories, although the number of disparities varied by category and service and by race and gender. It is important to note that the existence of statistically significant disparities does not necessarily mean they are the result of unwarranted or prohibited discrimination. Many job related or societal factors can contribute to racial and gender disparities.<sup>15</sup>

The GAO report verified that Blacks definitely fall behind in career enhancing assignments, especially in the combat arms.<sup>16</sup> Many people will read the above quote and immediately point out that it says it is not necessarily the result of discrimination. This is absolutely true that overt racism is probably not the main reason. But if not overt racism, what

are the reasons and how can we fix the problem?

In conducting research, especially the personal interviews with Black War College students and looking at statistical data from PERSCOM, it seems that the most difficult hurdle for Blacks is from Captain to Major. Figure -2 presents data from year groups 1973, 1974, . These year groups were chosen because many of the Black Officers at the War College are in these two year groups.

	YG 1973		YG 1974	
	Overall select %	Black Select %	Overall select%	Black Select %
Cpt	95.5	92.8	91.1	88.4
Maj	79.0	72.9	78.0	66.9
Ltc	61.4	65.6	60.5	61.7
Col	42.8	41.0	Unavailable	

Table-2  
Statistics from PERSCOM promotions branch.<sup>17</sup>

What does this information tell the reader? Clearly, Blacks fall behind at the O-4 level. Not as clear are the implications of this fallout. Let me explain. What is important here is what statistics are presented: frequencies (numbers of officers) or percentage of selects. They tell different stories. The statistics presented are percent selected based on the available candidates within the next lower rank. For example, the 92.8% Black select rate to the rank Captain is based on the number of eligible Black First Lieutenants. The 72.9% select rate is based on the number of black Captains (i.e., 72.9% of the 92.8% of the 1LTs). A lower select rate at a preceding rank will automatically limit the numbers of selectees, and consequently the number of eligibles for the next promotion. Therefore, decisions earlier in the pipeline will have devastating consequences on the numbers of officers subsequently promoted although the rates will appear competitive.

Year Group 1973 is a good example since only 1.8 percentage points separate the Blacks from the overall select rate for Colonel (0-6). The number of White Officers eligible was 1,082 and the number of Blacks was 117<sup>18</sup>. With the 42.8% and 41.0% select rate, 455 Whites and 48 Blacks were promoted. What looks good statistically is, however, in reality very poor for Blacks. The numerical pool of White Officers is so much greater that equal promotion rates at higher ranks are a losing proposition for minorities. It would have been more meaningful to compare Black and White promotion rates using the total number of entering officers as the denominator - but these numbers were unavailable. The significant hurdle for the 1973 and 1974 year groups seems to be from captain to major.

To determine if this is a continuing trend or an anomaly, let's look at promotion rates for officers in year groups 1984 and 1985. For these groups, the percentage of select and numbers of officers are available.

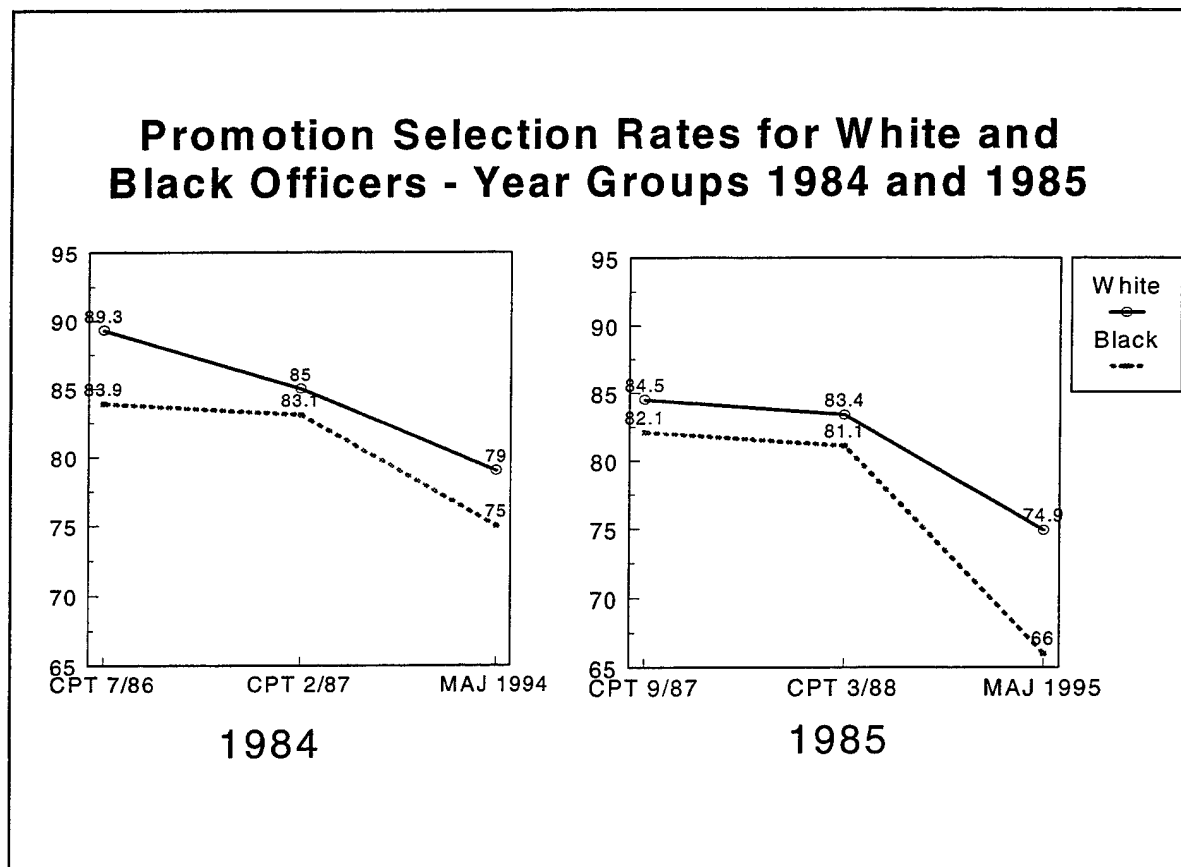
Year Group 84					
White			Black		
	eligible/selected	%	eligible/selected		%
Cpt Jul 86	1659/1483	89.3%	361/303		83.9%
Cpt Feb 87	3759/3196	85.0%	577/480		83.1%
Maj FY 94	1702/1346	79.0%	304/228		75.0%

Year Group 85					
White			Black		
	eligible/selected	%	eligible/selected		%
Cpt Sept 87	1759/1488	84.5%	353/290		82.1%
Cpt Mar 88	3383/2823	83.4%	467/379		81.1%
Maj FY 95	1603/1202	74.9%	312/206		66.0%

Table-3

Figure 2



The above data is from FOIA<sup>19</sup>. These two year groups were chosen because there is ten years that separates them from the first set of year groups profiled. The year groups are sufficiently separated in time, that should there be a continuing trend, the data would indicate it. This was also the first time that a year group was split and there were two promotion boards for the same year group. The data from year groups 1984 and 1985 mirror the statistics from 10 years earlier. Black and white select rates for Captain are similar, but Black select rates for Major are much lower (an average of 6% lower). One additional aspect that compounds the problem of the pool of promotion eligibles is the high rate of attrition. For year groups 1984 and 1985, 66% of the White Officers and 72% of the Black Officers have left the service before they are eligible for

consideration for promotion to Major.<sup>20</sup> To me this is a clear signal that something is wrong in the system if Blacks attrite at a higher rate and continually fall behind in promotions to Major.

The data I collected from interviews and my personal experience can shed some light on this. In their early career a Black Officer falls into only two *de facto* categories. There are those that are extremely good and the rest. If a Black Officer is average or needs help in his early years he will be forced out early or, if he is lucky, he will retire as a Major.

From my experience, an additional phenomenon may be occurring. Having had the privilege of sitting on a promotion board for major, I can say that the board process is as fair and equal as possible. All the files are reviewed dispassionately and the best get selected. The problem is not with the files but what is contained or not contained on the files. The problems start much earlier. Col Maxie thinks it starts when the young officer reports to his unit and receives little or no guidance on career enhancing jobs, OER's etc. In my opinion, in today's Army, an officer can't have a weak performance appraisal - Officer Efficiency Report (OER) - and continue to be promoted. Unfortunately, some young Black Officers are being told a weaker OER gives them room to grow, and therefore, accept it.

Continuing on the career ladder from Major to Colonel, the pattern persists. The last statistical areas that we will examine is the selection for Lieutenant Colonel - Command Designated Position List (CDPL). Lieutenant Colonels (LTCs) on the CDPL are board selected for Battalion Command positions. Battalion Command is perceived to be a quality cut and a "prerequisite" for promotion to Colonel. The following table shows the board selection rates for Blacks and Whites for LTC-CDPL for Fiscal Years 1993, 1994, and 1995.

Year	Selection Rate Whites	Selection Rates Blacks
1993	13.86%	12.06%
1994	12.66%	8.43%
1995	12.44%	5.54%

Table-4 (Data from DCSPER.<sup>21</sup>) .

Again, we see much lower selection rates for Blacks, and as everyone in the army knows, you need battalion command experience is required to be competitive for colonel promotion. The lower select rate for Blacks vs. Whites for Battalion Command positions automatically puts Blacks at a disadvantage for promotion to Colonel.

## DISCUSSION

The statistical data and data from surveys would support the thesis that Blacks are failing in the Army in the higher ranks. Let's put all of this into some kind of perspective to understand why.

Is the problem institutional racism from a White male dominated society, or is it a problem that many young Blacks bring with them into this arena? Is this a problem that is fostered by some of the military institutions and organizations? We will delve into these realms and look at who or what is responsible for the disparity, and what can be done to rectify the problem. The contribution of education, mentorship, culture, and the "good old boy" network to the disparity will be discussed.

## EDUCATION

The biggest problem for Black junior officers in the opinion of many of the Black Officers at the Army War College is the poor military education that many receive prior to coming on active duty. White and Black senior officers at the Army War College perceived a

correlation between where an officer was educated and his subsequent success.<sup>22</sup> It seems that Black Officers who graduate from West Point or a predominantly White institution have a better chance of succeeding than Black Officers who graduate from Historical Black Colleges (HBCs). The difference may be in the quality and professionalism in the ROTC programs offered and the career competitiveness of the instructors. The following is a quote from a respondent to my questionnaire.

As you are well aware a number of young Blacks self destruct (DUI, Drugs, Fraternization, etc). Don't know if it is due to immaturity, poor mentorship or piss poor ROTC programs. Rarely do a Black from the military academy get caught in embarrassing situations. Maybe our ROTC programs are not stressing professional behavior and need closer observation.<sup>23</sup>

The caliber of officers that instruct in ROTC assignments must be high and these officers must remain career competitive. This is not to imply that the officers who instruct in ROTC programs aren't of high quality and competitive. However, if one assumes that selection for Battalion Command is a quality cut, the data clearly shows that only a very small percentage of ROTC instructors overall are selected; and an even smaller percentage of those who instruct at an Historical Black Colleges. On the other side of this coin, a large percentage of the officers selected for Battalion Command in 1993, 1994, and 1995 served as instructors at West Point.<sup>24</sup> Is the Army sending a signal that West Point is the premier institution, and therefore get the best instructors and the ROTC programs get what's left?

The majority of the Black Officers that graduate from West Point or a large racially integrated school seem do quite well in adjusting to military life. The major problems seem to come from the Black Officers that graduated from Historical Black Colleges. Since college is the fertile field for our next generation of officers it would seem logical that the Army would send

some of its premier officers to be ROTC as instructors.. It would seem that the Army would make an investment in the future by putting some of its stars in ROTC assignments where they would have the opportunity to influence the future leaders in the Army.

As one goes through the lists of officers who served in ROTC assignments, it becomes clear that the majority of officers at Historical Black Colleges were all Black.<sup>25</sup> Why don't more White Officers instruct at HBC's? Department of Defense policy is that equal opportunity is an integral part of military life. If this is true why not give everyone regardless of color the opportunity to teach at any institution of higher learning. This would have many positive effects on influencing young officers of all races before being commissioned. What kind of signal does this send to the Black student? Where is his opportunity to get involved in cross cultural relationships. Many of these students have never had a meaningful relationship with a person of another race. Should they not be exposed to something like the real Army before actually entering service? At the same time according to DOD policy Blacks can and should be offered the opportunity to teach at predominately White Institutions of higher learning.

### MENTORSHIP

With such a low percentage of senior Black Officers there are few role models for Black officers to emulate, and few Black mentors to show them the pitfalls. The Army puts a lot of effort into the mentorship program, but the majority of the young Black Officers receive little to no mentoring or counseling except at OER time. Many Black Officers don't realize that they have the right to talk to the senior rater. The primary reason that Blacks have trouble finding a mentor is that there are so few senior Black Officers. It seems to be harder for some young Black Officers to adjust to certain performance and leadership challenges because of cultural

differences. While mentoring should be color-blind, a Black mentor who understands the Black culture and who has also been successful in the White majority military can usually best relate to the young Black Officer. It is critical for young Black Officers to find themselves a mentor. Young Black Officers often fail to get attached to a mentor early on; they tend to seek assistance only during crises situations. While we might like mentorship to transcend race, the reality (based on my interviews with several White Officers in the Army War College Class 1996) doesn't match.<sup>26</sup>

The White Officers often had a difficult time getting to know the Black junior officers. One officer from Georgia took a great deal of pride in telling me how he basically forced his Black Lts to become part of the unit. He said that he often had to draw them out by letting them know that he was there for them and if they had a problem they could come to him. Getting them to trust him was the hardest part, but once that bond was established it was easy to guide them in the right direction. Unfortunately, the most common theme was that "I really didn't get to know most of them but I had one good one." The good one usually came from West Point or a large university, and seemed to have something in common with him.

When the officers were asked about why they didn't get to know many of the others, the answer was that the Black Lieutenants always seemed hostile or they didn't want to be bothered. When asked about their White Officers, most of the Colonels would speak quite fondly of several of them and at great length. When questioned about this they all said race had nothing to do with it; they just established a good relationship. Having established these relationships with their junior officers, when it is time to give someone that great job, who gets it?

## CULTURE

Cultural differences are another issue that traditionally causes problems for Black Officers. It must be acknowledged that Blacks and Whites in the United States have two different cultures. The Army is primarily a White male dominated society with which many Blacks have little or no experience. The opposite can also be true, consequently many White commanders won't acknowledge the difference with a sense of neutrality or an unbiased perspective.

Although we claim to be a homogeneous society, there are racial differences in attitudes on everything from music to dress. For example there are many officers whose lives revolve around the military, that's all they know. Take this and a white male dominated, conservative atmosphere, add a non-conservative young Black whose life doesn't revolve around the military, who comes from a different socio-economic environment, and you have the perfect recipe for serious conflict.

To put this in perspective. How many White Officers have ever participated in a social event where a majority of the participants have been non- military Blacks? The answer is probably very few. How many whites have ever participated in a social event where the majority of the participants were Black? Having had the privilege of witnessing this phenomenon from my home here at Carlisle Barracks, let me enlighten you to how most Whites react in this situation-- very uncomfortably. They find that they don't quite know what to say, and it is hard for them to follow some of the conversations. They may try to speak in the Black vernacular, but don't really understand how to use it. For example this past summer some of my Black neighbors and I were sitting out and having a beer, a White neighbor came by and said "What be

it", no one had any idea what he was saying.

They also have a tendency of seeking out any other White person at the party and staying close to them. These people have been in the military for a few years and have been repeatedly exposed to Blacks in their careers. If Whites who have had experience with Blacks behave inappropriately, why do we expect a new Black Officer to react any differently, especially when he has probably had little social interface with Whites.

Military social life is a fairly complicated and structured enigma which many officers - even for those with over 20 years of service . It is not intuitively clear how an officer should behave in all situations. If a young officer does not behave as expected, it would be unfair to assume the young officer knows the expected behavior. For example, if the young Black Officer doesn't go to a hail and farewell, it may be more effective to ask him why he did not attend. Many young Blacks and their wives don't know how they are suppose to act in a military social setting; therefore, they take the easy way and just don't attend rather than be embarrassed. Any type of social setting for a new officer can be a frightening experience, especially so if you are the only minority there.

If the officer arrives in the unit without sufficient education about military etiquette, someone must teach him. If need be instruct him on what he needs to do in a military social setting. The officer needs someone experienced who can teach them the norms of military society. This can be accomplished through ROTC programs, but only if quality instructors are assigned. This is a subject that could also be incorporated into the officer basic course. The only place that gives formal detailed school training in military customs and courtesy to incoming officers is the Military Academy.

Most officers are extremely conservative in their mode of dress and look at anything out of the norm as radical. For a long time, I believed that officers were issued khaki pants, pullover shirts with collars, and loafers. This seemed to be the universally accepted casual dress for officers. At social functions, many khaki clad officers would always feel compelled to comment on the dress of any officer not dressed in the norm. In the military, anyone not strictly conforming would stand out and be perceived as a rebel.

Mustaches are another example of differences in dress and appearance between Blacks and Whites. In the Army, mustaches are allowed; but they clash with the mores of the White male dominated military culture. A officer with a mustache tends to attract comments, specifically about how officers don't have mustaches. In the Army many people make an erroneous correlation between job performance and a mustache. One day I was in the hall at headquarters and a gentleman said "You know one day your picture will be on this wall," I informed him that I didn't think I would ever be a general. He was adamant, and said "No, I believe that one day your picture will be up here, but first tell me what is different about you and every picture here?" After considerable thought I said, "They are all White." This was not the answer he was looking for although it was true. This gentleman was subtly informing me that successful officers generals don't have mustaches, therefore the only thing that would hinder my career was my mustache.

It is my perception that the majority of the White Officers feel that a mustache is a sign of rebellion. In the army the majority of the people with the mustache are minorities. The regulation says you can have a mustache, but if your boss doesn't like it you will pay. Why are there no officers in the Rangers or in the 82d Airborne with mustaches. The answer is because

the leadership says you won't have one. If the majority of the people with mustaches are minorities, how many of them will shave to be in one of the aforementioned units? The answer is some will but a lot will not sacrifice a sense of cultural pride and identity for an assignment into one of these so called elite units. As everyone knows an assignment with one of these elite units can be considered a career enhancing assignment, why should a Black Officer be forced to make a choice for cultural identity or career enhancement.

These aforementioned cultural problems or misconceptions are some of the causes of many Blacks officers falling behind early in their careers. We have talked about socialization skills, and dress. How do these qualities help the officer to fail? There is an old adage in the army that generals make people that look like themselves generals. This is true not only at the general officer level but at all levels of the military.

#### GOOD OLD BOY NETWORK

This is a good segue into my last area of discussion, the GOOD OLD BOY network. It is alive and well in the US Army. This is what the GAO study and the study by Col Maxie are referring to when they said that senior commanders should monitor company level assignments. The key gates in the Army for success are Company Command, Executive Officer, (XO) and Operations Officer (S-3). Commanders usually have influence in the selection of their S-3 and XO. As described previously many Commanders never get to know the young Black Officers in their units. the Black Officer is probably not going to be the first choice simply because he is a unknown quantity not because of quality and the ability to do the job. To level the playing field, these critical assignments must be monitored above Battalion level. This idea will be considered heresy in the good old-boy circle because everyone wants to get "his man". If we are ever to

have equal opportunity for all the Army culture must change from who you know to what you know.

## CONCLUSION

My purpose in writing this paper was to inform not to antagonize anyone or throw stones. Most of us are products of this system and have thrived. I am simply trying to enable the reader to see things from the perspective of a Black Officer. The data used came from DCSPER, the Army Times, GAO studies, surveys, and information from personal interviews, but this information only serves to highlight the problem. The question now is: what are we going to do with this information? If we take the traditional approach we will talk about it, study it, analyze it and hope that it will not raise its ugly head on our watch.

There is another approach. Based on my experiences and the information available, there are specific actions that senior leadership can and should take. It comes with the realization that the system is by no means perfect and it can be improved.

The Army's strategic leadership could significantly enhance the promotion of a level playing field for all, by ensuring the military education of all incoming officers is equal. College ROTC is the critical time where there is the opportunity to influence the attitudes of the young cadets. To be effective in forming and influencing the next generation of officers we must send the best and brightest officers (ie., those with promotion and command potential) to be ROTC instructors at our colleges and universities to include HBCs.

The biggest thing that we must do, and perhaps the easiest, is to start educating our officers and senior leaders at all levels in cultural awareness. Real cultural awareness, not political correctness or whatever the new catch phrase is, but actually making an effort to

understand why a person reacts a certain way. We must also educate our officer corps on such subjects as cultural diversity, bias, and Equal Opportunity. The process of socialization is slow and must be worked at all levels. To be able to start this process, we must educate the Army leadership on cultural differences in the society, and how to deal with these differences. This education must start in the pre-command course if not sooner. Many officers have no idea that problems in the broader society, like discrimination, exist in the military. By early and continuous diversity education, the culture of the Army can be changed to reflect more tolerance and understanding. The education of the officer corps must be started at the basic course and continue in all phases of military education to include the AWC.

As professional soldiers we need to learn to communicate across cultural lines. The U.S. Army Special Forces calls this cross cultural communication. The USAWC and many other Army schools spend a lot of money on the Myers-Briggs test to tell us what most of us already know ( this test uses as its base line white males). Why not spend that time and money teaching us about soldiers, why they act the way they do, why some are perceived to have bad attitudes. Teach us how to work through some of our cultural biases, or at least make us aware that we all have some. Once we acknowledge that we have these biases then we can start to work through them.

Senior commanders must focus on performance and potential in job assignments and minimize the impact of the old boy network. This can be done if performance standards are specified and related only to the job. Once standards are set they must also be monitored. Any manipulation of the system which results in unfairness must be dealt with swiftly. If this happens, the playing field will automatically become more level. This problem has frequently

been acknowledged but never dealt with directly. The Army culture of "taking care of ones buddies" easily translates into "the good old boy" network which excludes most young Black Officers. With no mentors or support system, they have no one to take care of them, and are left out of the network-to the detriment of both the Army and the Officer. Every year the Army loses a lot of talent because some Black Officers do not feel that they are part of the team.

Lastly the Army must stop paying lip service to the mentoring program and make it a viable program. Mentoring must be conducted by everyone in a leadership position for every junior officer in the unit. This should be conducted equally for all junior officers-not just those whom we like or favor by color or temperament. The key to this process is that the mentor must have the moral courage to look the subordinate in the eye and give him an honest appraisal. Too often, Black Officers are given cursory on-the-job appraisals because the supervisors find it difficult to confront less than satisfactory performance or are afraid of being labeled prejudiced. Without knowledge of what is wrong or how to correct it, the Black Officer will never be able to improve. What is important, however, is that the mentoring must emphasize the positive, the negative, and even more important-how to improve.

I wrote this paper in the hope that the faculty or the commandant would possibly gain some insights to improve the USAWC. The USAWC, this bastion of free/creative thinking, also hinders cross cultural communication. Every seminar has a female, 2 foreign students, a civilian, and a reservist. This distribution enhances understanding among the diverse groups. There are 21 Black students at the AWC but not every seminar has a Black officer. Blacks are a significant participant group with a different perspective not otherwise available. If this changes, I will be fulfilled and happy that maybe I did make a difference.

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